

Ask the expert: the messenger effect on influence

Influence is important to succeed in a squiggly career. It helps you get ideas heard, build trust, and navigate change, but it doesn't always feel easy or natural. One simple but powerful approach to influence is to focus not just on the message, but also on the messenger – who delivers it, and how.

"We live in a society full of information, making it hard to decide what to listen to or believe. Instead of asking: "What should I pay attention to?", ask: "Who can I rely on? Whose voice do I trust?""



Steve Martin, author and CEO of Influence at work (UK).

It's a quick, easy shortcut to guide us in the right direction"

Types of messengers: hard vs soft

To cut through noise and conflicting opinions, we turn to messengers we trust – not just the messages we hear.

- 🔗 **Hard messengers** carry status. They're experts, well-known, or have dominant personalities.
- 🔗 **Soft messengers** connect through warmth, trust and vulnerability.

Understanding which style suits the message and audience helps you to influence more effectively.

Ideas for action



1. Match the messenger to the message

Being the most knowledgeable/experienced person doesn't always mean you have the most influence when communicating a specific message.

- 🔗 Ask yourself: does this message need authority, or connection? Am I the right person to deliver the message?
- 🔗 As a team: pick the top 3 messages for the next quarter. Decide together who is the best messenger for each.

2. Highlight everyone's messenger value

In meetings/discussions that you're leading, introduce each person referencing their area of expertise and what they can contribute to the conversation.

This approach helps to:

- 🔗 Show why each person is an important messenger/the influence they have.
- 🔗 Give influence to someone with brilliant insight whose voice isn't always heard.

3. Create credibility if in-person cues are missing

Online meetings remove many of the usual cues that show relatability and credibility. To build trust and influence, try:

- 🔗 Adding your role/qualifications to your display name.
- 🔗 Lower your microphone volume to sound calm and clear.
- 🔗 Mirroring key phrases to show you're listening/connected.

Coach yourself questions

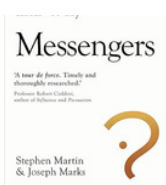
When do I see influence in action at work?



When could adapting my approach to influencing have the bigger difference to my impact at work?



Recommended resources



Messengers: Who We Listen To, Who We Don't, And Why
Book by Steve Martin and Joseph Marks.



Helen and Robert Cialdini discuss Robert's work on influence and how it can be applied to your career development in episode **#452** of the podcast.